

**Wildlife Committee Meeting
May 2, 2014
Commission Room**

I. Update Item: Spring Turkey Season

The Wildlife Division will present the harvest results to date from the 2014 spring turkey season, a comparison to the 2013 harvest, as well as 5-year trend data.

II. Update Item: Waterfowl Status Report

The Wildlife Division will provide a brief summary for the following items during the Committee Meeting:

- Spring goose population survey
- Wood ducks
- Update on efforts for getting additional "teal only" days added to September wood duck season
- Harvest Information Program Data – need for improved data collection from hunters

III. Discussion Item: 2014 - 2015 Early Migratory Bird Seasons

A. Early Migratory Bird Dates:

Mourning Dove: (proposed 20 additional days)	September 1 – October 26, 2014 (56 days) November 27 – December 7, 2014 (11 days) Dec. 20, 2014 - January 11, 2015 (23 days)
Canada goose:	September 1 – 15, 2014
American woodcock:	November 1 – December 15, 2014
Rails, Gallinules, and Moorhens:	September 1 – November 9, 2014
Common snipe:	September 17 – October 27, 2014 November 27 – February 1, 2015
Wood duck and teal:	September 17 – 22, 2014
Sandhill Crane:	December 13, 2014 – January 11, 2015

B. Early Migratory Bag Limits:

September Canada Goose Season:

Pending the results of the current spring season survey, the Wildlife Division may recommend an increase in the bag limit for the September Canada goose season from 3 to 5. When the Migratory Bird Program completes the survey, they will propose a recommendation regarding this possible bag limit change.

Teal/wood Duck Season:

At their March meeting, the Mississippi Flyway Council recommended the bag limit for teal in KY & TN be increased from 4 to 6. Last year, the US Fish and Wildlife Service increased the teal bag limit for states with September teal-only seasons. KY and TN were not included because we have combined teal/wood duck seasons, and the recommendation was for teal seasons only.

This year, the Flyway corrected the oversight by making a specific recommendation to the Service. The Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management supports the Flyway's assessment that this change will not significantly increase teal harvest within these states. The Service Regulations Committee will act on the recommendation at the June SRC meeting. It is important to note this recommendation does not change the wood duck bag limit. It would be an aggregate daily bag limit of teal/wood ducks in which the total bag could not include more than two wood ducks.

IV. Discussion Item: Wild Turkey Season Recommendations for 2014

A) Shotgun Gauge Restrictions for Youth Turkey Hunters

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss a recommendation to amend existing minimum shotgun gauge restrictions for youth turkey hunters.

Justification: The Wildlife Division has received multiple requests to examine the feasibility of allowing youth turkey hunters to use .410-gauge shotguns during any open turkey season. Proponents for this change propose that allowing the use of a shotgun with less recoil than a 20-gauge will increase recruitment and retention among youth turkey hunters. Currently, Kentucky is the only state within the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (15 states) that impose minimum gauge restrictions for turkey hunters.

B) Use of Turkey Calls Before the Spring Season

The Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions would like to discuss a recommendation to eliminate regulatory language that prohibits pre-season calling for wild turkeys on private lands.

Justification: Per 301 KAR 2:140, a person shall not mimic the sound of a wild turkey from March 1 until the opening of the spring season in an area where turkeys are expected to occur. This restriction has no real biological impacts to existing turkey population numbers and largely served to prevent the establishment of call-shy birds on public lands. Likewise, this restriction is difficult to enforce on private lands and removal would assist ongoing efforts to simplify KDFWR regulations.

C) Daily Bag Limit for Wild Turkeys in the Fall

The Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions would like to discuss a regulatory cleanup item to clarify that one (1) bird may be taken per day in the fall.

Justification: Historically, the daily bag limit for wild turkeys has been one (1) bird in the spring and fall seasons in Kentucky. In 301 KAR 2:144 "Fall Wild Turkey Hunting", however, the regulatory language does not adequately address the issue of a daily bag limit. The Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions propose an amendment to clarify that only one (1) wild turkey may be taken per day during fall turkey seasons.

D) Season Bag Limit for Wild Turkeys in the Fall

The Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions would like to discuss a recommendation to allow archery and crossbow hunters to take all four (4) wild turkeys outside of the fall firearm season for turkeys.

Justification: Current regulatory language specifies a four (4) bird season limit in the fall whereby hunters may take two (2) turkeys during the archery and crossbow seasons and two (2) turkeys during the firearm season. As stated, archery and crossbow hunters may take four (4) birds, but two of those must be taken during the firearm season. There is no biological justification for this restriction, and allowing archery and crossbow hunters to take four (4) birds outside of the fall firearm seasons would have no measureable impacts on harvest levels while offering more opportunity in the process. Therefore, the Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions recommend allowing archery and crossbow hunters to take the full season bag limit during the non-firearm seasons.

E) Fall Turkey Hunting and Baiting for Deer

The Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions would like to discuss the feasibility of allowing a person to legally hunt wild turkeys in the fall within an established distance from feeders or bait intended for deer.

Justification: Currently, turkeys may be hunted in mowed or manipulated corn fields and this is considered a legal means of take in the fall. Conversely, turkey hunting may be limited or even prohibited on some farms due to the presence of active deer feeders. This issue is especially prevalent for the first fall shotgun season that occurs approximately 2 weeks prior to the modern gun season for deer when corn is abundant across the landscape. Currently, 8 of 15 SEAFWA member states permit Eastern turkeys to be hunted in the fall and 5 of those establish a minimum distance that a person must be positioned from bait when hunting turkeys.

V. Discussion Item: Furbearer Trapping Season Recommendations for 2014

A) Spacing Requirement for Traps Set on Land

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss a recommendation to eliminate the existing 10-foot spacing requirement between traps set on dry land.

Justification: The Wildlife Division has received a request from the United Trappers of Kentucky (UTK) to amend the current regulation that prohibits land sets from being placed within ten (10) feet from one another. UTK and the Fur Takers of Kentucky feel this restriction is prohibitive and limits success in areas with abundant trapping opportunities, such as beaver dams and along fence rows. Likewise, Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators have also expressed that this 10-foot spacing requirement is overly restrictive and impedes trapping success when using cage traps.

B) Hunter Orange Requirements for Trappers

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss hunter orange requirements for fur trappers.

C) Trap Restrictions on KDFWR Owned and Operated Lands

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss a recommendation to restrict body-gripping traps set on land on public lands owned or managed by the KDFWR. Only body-gripping traps smaller than 5x5 inches would be allowed for land sets.

Justification: Increasingly, the Wildlife Division must address real or potential conflicts between user groups on WMAs and other public lands.

In an effort to minimize potential for conflict, the Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions propose a proactive restriction on the use of body-gripping trap sets on dry land on these public lands so as to prevent the capture of non-target domestic animals in these kill traps. This proposed restriction would still allow the use of body-gripping traps as water sets.

D) Registration for Trapping on WMAs

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss a recommendation to establish a standard means of registration for trappers on WMAs.

Justification: As stated in the previous discussion item, the Wildlife Division is committed to maximizing hunting-related opportunities on WMAs while striving to alleviate potential user conflicts. Across the Commonwealth, hunters use dogs for a variety of pursuits on WMAs that are concurrently utilized by trappers. The Wildlife Division would like to discuss the implementation of a standard registration form that will enable WMA managers to document trapping activities so as to prevent user conflicts with dog-related activities. Likewise, the Wildlife Division has already established a WMA Use Permit Application to document field and retriever trials, as well as shoot-to-retrieve field trails.

E) Definition of a Water Set

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss a recommendation to amend the regulatory definition of "water sets" for fur trapping.

Justification: Per 301 KAR 2:251, "water sets" mean a trap set to submerge an animal in water upon capture. However, body-gripping traps are often not fully submerged when used in water. Common practice by beaver and mink trappers, for instance, is to leave a portion of body-gripping traps out of the water. In an effort to make the regulatory definition of water sets more inclusive of common water trapping methods, the Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions recommend amending the definition to the following:

"Water set" means a trap set in water adjacent to and part of streams, ponds, lakes, wetlands or other water courses and includes floating sets.

F) Checking Requirements for Bobcats and River Otters

The Wildlife Division would like to discuss the following recommendations concerning the checking process for river otters and bobcats:

- 1) CITES tags must be immediately attached to a bobcat or river otter carcass upon receipt of the tag; and
- 2) Bobcats and river otters must be telechecked prior to leaving Kentucky.

Justification: Currently, 301 KAR 2:251 does not specify these requirements. However, the Wildlife and Law Enforcement Divisions recommend these changes to prevent the Kentucky bobcats and river otters from being sold at auction with CITES tags from other states.

VI. Update Item: Ballard WMA – Office Building Plans/Construction

The Wildlife and Engineering Divisions would like to update the Commission on the planning for constructing a new office building at the Ballard WMA.

VII. Update Item: Sinking Valley WMA

The new WMA is 804 acres located in eastern Pulaski County. It is in the Buck Creek watershed and drains a portion of the county that empties at Short Creek, a local landmark and scenic destination. The property and general area are unique because of karst features. There are multiple caves on the property and all of the area known as Sinking Valley has limited stream surface flow.

The property was well-managed prior to purchase by a landowner who has received extensive technical guidance from KDFWR biologists over the years. Much of the property is in high quality forest habitat and it has extremely healthy populations of deer and turkey in addition to other species.

The area is currently under contract for boundary marking and KDFWR staff will be working this summer to develop signage and parking. We anticipate having the area prepared for opening this fall.

We propose the WMA be open under statewide regulations for all hunting and trapping except for deer. For deer, the area is recommended as open for archery/crossbow only with the exception of youth weekends when firearm hunting should be allowed according to statewide regulations.

VIII. Update Item: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

The RMEF asked to address the commission regarding the recent elk restoration projects in Virginia and Missouri.